

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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BY THE AUTHOR OF "AUNT MARGARET'S TROUBLE."
IN FIVE BOOKS.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER XI. THE PARTNERS.

AFTER having been introduced to her at Bayswater, Miss Betsy Boyce called on Mrs. Lovegrove. The latter was a good deal flattered by the visit; which might have been inferred by those who knew her well, from the loftily patronising tone she assumed in speaking of Miss Boyce.

"Miss Boyce is a thoroughly well-connected person," said Mrs. Lovegrove, speaking across the dinner-table to her husband with much impressiveness.

"Ah!" said Mr. Lovegrove, who was engaged in carving beef for the family.

"It is curious how immediately one recognises blood."

"H'm!" murmured Mr. Lovegrove. "A little of the brown, Augustus?"

"No meat for me, sir, thank you! Vigil of Blessed Ranocchius," returned the son of the house, austerely.

"My papa was wont to say," proceeded Mrs. Lovegrove, "that his was some of the best blood in England—in a genealogical sense I mean. Not literally, of course, poor man, for he was a martyr to gout."

"Oh!" exclaimed Mr. Lovegrove, whose interest in his dinner appeared to be more intense than that which he felt in his wife's respected parent.

"And in Miss Boyce," continued Sarah, in an instructive manner which was one of her peculiarities, "there is, despite eccentricity, an air of birth and breeding quite unmistakable."

"She seems a good-natured old soul,"

said Mr. Lovegrove. Whereat his youngest daughter, Phoebe, began to giggle.

"Levity, Phoebe, is low," said Mrs. Lovegrove, sententiously. "Miss Boyce gave me a terrible account of—" Mrs. Lovegrove broke off in her speech, and pointed downward with her finger in a manner that might have seemed to argue a startling allusion to regions usually ignored in polite society. But her family understood very well that she intended to signify Mr. Frost, whose office was on the floor beneath the room they were sitting in.

"Eh?" said Mr. Lovegrove. And this time he raised his eyes from his plate.

"I mean of the wife—of the wife. Deplorable!"

"Well, then, she is a less good-natured old soul than I thought," said Mr. Lovegrove, gravely. "Mrs. Frost is her friend. I don't like that in Miss Betsy, my dear."

"Understand me, Augustus!" said Mrs. Lovegrove.

This phrase was frequently the preface to a rather long discourse on her part.

Her husband pushed his plate back, and began to cut his bread into little dice, which he afterwards arranged in symmetrical patterns with much care and exactitude.

"Understand me! I am not implicating Miss Boyce. Far from it. The deductions drawn from what she said are mine. I only am responsible for them. If too severely logical, I can but regret it. But I conceive they will be found to be correct when the facts are stated."

The facts, when arrived at, were not altogether new to Mr. Lovegrove. Mrs. Frost was extravagant. Mrs. Frost was selfish in seeking her own pleasure and society in a circle which her husband did not frequent, and of which he disapproved. Mrs. Frost, who after all was but the

wife of a respectable solicitor, had costly jewellery fit for any lady in the land! These were the main counts of Mrs. Lovegrove's indictment; and they were closely intermingled with much extraneous matter.

That afternoon Augustus Lovegrove said a few words to his father when they were alone together in the office.

"Do you know, father, I think that Mr. Frost ought to look after that wife of his a little more."

"Look after her! What do you mean?"

"I mean that he ought to curb her expenditure a little."

"I suppose he knows his own business best, Gus."

"Well, he certainly is very clever at other people's business. I don't deny that. But it may be that he is making a mess of his own. Such things sometimes happen. I did hear——"

"Eh? What did you hear?"

"Well, there are ugly rumours about the Parthenope Embellishment Company. And I did hear that Mr. Frost had dipped pretty deep in it."

"Gus, I hope you have not repeated any such gossip! It is always injurious to a professional man to be supposed unable to keep his tongue between his teeth."

"I, sir? Oh no; you may be quite easy about that. But I thought I would mention it to you."

"I don't attach any importance to it, Gus. Frost is too clear-sighted and long-headed to burn his fingers."

"So much the better, sir," returned Augustus, quietly. And there was no more said at that time on the matter.

But Mr. Lovegrove thought of it seriously. Mr. Frost's proceedings had been by no means satisfactory to him of late. It was not that he had neglected the business of the firm, nor that he had seemed absent and absorbed in his own private affairs on occasions when matters pertaining to the office should have claimed his best energies. Nor was it that Mr. Lovegrove had accidentally heard that his partner had dealings with a money-lender of questionable reputation; nor the floating rumours that tradesmen had been dunning for their bills at the elegant little house in Bayswater. It was not any one of these circumstances, taken singly, that made Mr. Lovegrove uneasy; but the combination of them unquestionably did so. And his wife's gossip respecting Mrs. Frost's extravagance, to which he would at another time have attached no importance,

became disquieting as adding one more to the accumulation of other facts. Later on that same afternoon, as he was leaving the office, he saw Hugh Lockwood coming out of Mr. Frost's private room. On the day when Hugh had given testimony as to the hour of Lady Tallis Gale's death, Mr. Lovegrove and the young man had conceived a strong respect for each other. There had been the slightest possible acquaintance between them up to that time.

"Good day, Mr. Lockwood," said Lovegrove, offering his hand. He was not surprised to see the young man coming from Mr. Frost's room. He was aware of the old and close intimacy that had existed between the latter and Hugh's father.

"Good day, sir."

"Is anything the matter, Mr. Lockwood?" asked Lovegrove, struck with the expression of Hugh's face.

"Nothing, thank you. That is—to say truth, I have been put out a little."

And Hugh hastily shook Mr. Lovegrove's hand, and walked away with a quick step. Mr. Lovegrove stood looking after him thoughtfully for a moment. Then he turned, and went into Mr. Frost's inner sanctum. He opened the door without first knocking at it, and, as the heavy panels swung back noiselessly, he had time to see his partner before his partner was aware of his presence.

Mr. Frost was standing at the little fireplace with his back to the door. He was leaning with his elbow on the mantelpiece, and supporting his head on his hands. At a slight noise, made by Mr. Lovegrove, he turned round, and the other man almost started on seeing the haggard face that fronted him. Mr. Frost's forehead was knit and creased into deeper folds than usual. There was a dark red flush upon it, and it seemed expressive of intense pain of mind or body. His jaw hung, and his usually firmly closed lips were parted. His eyes stared wildly, and seemed hardly to take note of that which they looked upon. All this lasted but for a second. He passed his hands over his forehead, and said:

"Hullo, Lovegrove! I didn't hear you come in. Do you want me? I hope not, just now; for I have an appointment, and must be off."

"I did want to say a word to you. I can wait, however. Do you know, Frost, that you are not looking at all well!"

"Am I not? Well, I have a devil of a headache."

"Don't you do anything for it? You really do look uncommonly ill."

"There's no cure for these things but time and patience. I have been over-working myself lately, I suppose. Or else I'm growing old."

"Old! nonsense! You are—why you must be five years my junior, and I——"

"Oh, you are as sound as a roach, and as fresh as a daisy. But, my dear fellow, age cannot always be counted by years. I feel worn out sometimes. How I hate this ceaseless grind, grind, grind at the mill!"

"H'm! Well, for my part, I can never be thoroughly happy out of harness for long together. When we take our sea-side holiday every summer, I am always the first to get tired of it. I long for what you call the pounce and parchment."

"Happy you!"

"If you hate it so, why don't you retire and give up your share of the business to my Gus? You haven't a tribe of daughters to provide for. You must be rich enough."

"Rich!" echoed Mr. Frost. "Who shall say what 'rich' means in these days? And besides, you know, one always wants a little more."

He had by this time nearly recovered his usual mien, and spoke with the self-confident careless air of superiority which had never failed to impress Mr. Lovegrove.

"Aye, aye, one knows all that," said the latter. "Why then, on the whole, you have—things have not gone so badly with you, eh?"

Frost gave him a quick and curious glance. Then his mouth stretched itself in a forced smile, to which, in the impossibility of attaining anything like spontaneity, he communicated an exaggerated expression of irony. He was conscious of this exaggeration; but his muscles were not under his own control.

"Oh yes, they have!" he exclaimed. "Things have gone very badly indeed with me. I haven't got what I want by some ten or fifteen thousand pounds."

"Ten or fifteen thou—by Jove!"

"Well, you know, Lovegrove, every man has his hobby. Mine has been to die worth a certain sum. I shan't tell you what sum; you would be shocked at the extravagance of my desires. Not having yet reached the figure I had set myself, I consider that I have the right to grumble. Consequently I do grumble—to the world. But," he added, with a sudden change of manner, "but between friends and partners, like you

and me, I may say that on the whole—on the whole, my nest isn't badly feathered."

"I thought it was—I thought so!" replied Lovegrove, nodding his head with a kind of sober triumph.

"Ah, but I grumble!"

"Rich men always do. Only, if I were you, Frost, I wouldn't grumble too much!"

"Eh?"

"Folks might take you at your word. And as all the world does not know how rich you want to be—why—don't you see?"

Mr. Frost laughed a little dry laugh, and clapped his partner on the shoulder.

"Ah," said he, "God knows there is wherewithal for plenty of grumbling without being poor. I'm harassed to death!"

"You have just had young Lockwood with you. I met him coming out."

"You met him! Did he—did he say anything?"

"Say anything? He said, 'Good day.' Oh, and he said, too, that he had been a good deal put out."

"Put out! He is terribly pig-headed."

"Is he? Well, I rather liked him. I thought he came out so well in that affair of proving the time of Lady Tallis's death. But I always thought you were such a great friend of his."

"I tried to be. I offered to get him a fine position with a company abroad. But there are people whom it is impossible to befriend. They won't let you."

"Dear me! Then he refused your offer?"

"Yes; I had given him a little time to consider of it. But he came to-day to—say that he would not hear of it. And that not in the most civil terms, either."

"Oh! So that was what he had been to see you about?"

"Of course! Did he say that he had come for anything else?"

"Not at all. I told you what he said. But talking of companies abroad, Frost, I wanted to say one word to you. I did hear——"

"Another time—another time, Lovegrove. I shall be late as it is. I have an appointment in the city;" and Mr. Frost pulled out his watch impatiently.

"Oh, well, I won't detain you. Some day—some evening, after business hours, I should like to have a quiet chat with you, though."

"Of course. Delighted. Whenever you like."

Mr. Frost hurried off, and threw himself into the first empty cab that happened to

be passing. As Mr. Lovegrove came out again through the front office, the senior clerk was putting on his hat and gloves preparatory to going home.

"Oh, Mr. Lovegrove," said the clerk, "you were asking me about the bill of costs in *Bowcher v. Bowcher*!"

"Yes, I was. Has it been paid?"

"It has, sir. Their solicitors sent down this afternoon, and the bill was paid. You were not here. Mr. Frost took the notes, saying that he was going into the city this afternoon, and would bank them."

"Oh, very well, Mr. Burgess."

When the clerk had left, Mr. Lovegrove's face changed.

"Another instance of Frost's thoughtlessness," he muttered. "He takes money to the bank for the firm, and does not go to the city until after banking hours. It had much better have been sent in the regular way. I suppose the truth is, he is too busy growing rich on his own account. I should never have guessed that Frost had the ambition of being wealthy. I hope he won't burn his fingers with speculations in trying to grow rich in a hurry. But he certainly is a very superior man! A most superior man is Frost. All the same, when your clever fellow does make a mistake, it is apt to be a big one."

CHAPTER XIII. TROUBLE.

MR. FROST left his office in a state of pitiable disorder and anxiety of mind. It has been said that Sidney Frost hated failure; and still more the avowal of failure. He had originally involved himself in a web of dishonourable complications for the sake of winning the woman who had inspired the sole strong passion of his life. And it was still his infatuated love for her that caused the greater part of his distress. What would Georgy do? What would Georgy say? How would Georgy bear it if—the worst should happen? These were the chief questions with which he tormented himself. And at the same time he well knew, in his heart, that she would be cold as ice and hard as granite to his sufferings.

His business in the city, and the rumours he heard there, did not tend to reassure him. He drove to his home jaded and wretched. The headache which he had falsely pleaded to Mr. Lovegrove had become a reality. He threw himself on a sofa in the drawing-room and shut his eyes. But his nerves were in a state of too great irritation to allow him to sleep. Nor did the cessation from movement seem to bring

repose. He tried to stretch and relax his limbs into a position of ease; but he ached in every muscle, and was as weary as a man who has gone through a day of hard bodily labour. Presently his wife entered the room. Care, and toil, and anxiety had set no mark on *her*. Her peach-like cheeks were smooth and fresh; her eyes bright and clear; her hair was glossy, abundant, and unmingled with a thread of grey. She was dressed in a dinner costume whose unobtrusive simplicity might have deceived an uninstructed eye as to its costliness. But, both in material and fashion, Mrs. Frost's attire was of the most expensive. Not a detail was imperfect: from the elegant satin slipper that fitted her well-formed foot to a nicety, to the fine old cream-coloured lace round her bosom. There was no jewel on her neck or in her ears; not a chain, not a brooch, not a pin. But on one round white arm she wore, set in a broad band of gold, the famous opal, whose mild, milky lustre, pierced here and there by darts of fire, contrasted admirably with the deep purple of her dress. Her husband, lying on the sofa, looked at her from beneath his half-closed eyelids, as she stood for a moment uncertain whether he were awake or asleep. She was very beautiful. What dignity in the simple steadiness of her attitude! How placid the expanse of her broad white forehead! How sweet and firm her closed red lips! How mild, grave, and matronly the light in her contemplative eyes! She seemed to bring an air of peace into the room. Even the slight perfume that hung about her garments was soothing and delicious. If she would but stand so, silent and adorable, until her husband's eyes should close, and sleep come down upon them like a balm!

Thought is wonderfully rapid. Sidney Frost had time to see all that we have described, and to frame the above-recorded wish, before his wife opened her handsome mouth, and said, in the rich, low voice habitual to her:

"Sidney, that man has been dunning again for his bill."

Crash! The sweet vision was gone, shattered into broken fragments like a clear lake-picture disturbed by a stone thrown into its waters. The veins in Frost's forehead started and throbbed distractingly. He could not suppress a groan—more of mental than physical pain, however—and he pressed his hot hands to his still hotter brow.

"Sidney! do you hear? That insolent man has been dunning. You don't seem to consider how disagreeable it is for me!"

"What insolent man? Who is it that you mean?" muttered Frost, closing his eyes completely.

"You may well ask. Duns have been quite numerous lately," rejoined Mrs. Frost, with a sneer, as she seated herself in an arm-chair opposite to the sofa. "But none of them have been so insupportable as that Wilson."

"The jeweller?"

"Yes; the jeweller. And you know, really and truly, Sidney, this kind of thing must be put a stop to."

Frost smiled bitterly.

"How do you suggest putting a stop to it?" he asked.

"I suggest! You are too amusing."

It would be impossible to convey the disdain of the tone in which this was said.

"Wilson came here, and saw you, and was insolent?"

"Very."

"What did he say?"

"How can I repeat word for word what he said? He declared that he must have the price of the opal bracelet. I happened to have it on, and that put it into his head, I suppose. He said, too, very impertinently, that people who cannot afford to pay for such jewels had no right to wear them. I told him that was your affair."

"My affair! I don't wear bracelets."

"You know that it is nonsense talking in that way, Sidney. I beg you to understand that I cannot be exposed to the insults of tradespeople."

"Can you not? Listen, Georgina. Tomorrow you must give me that opal when I go to business. I shall drive first to Wilson's, and ask him to take back the bracelet. He will probably make me pay for your having had it so long, but, as the stone is a really fine one, I think he will consent to take it back."

"Take back my bracelet!"

"It is not your bracelet. Do you remember that, when you first spoke of buying it, I forbade you to do so, and told you the price of it was beyond my means to pay?"

"Take back my bracelet!"

"Come here, Georgy. Sit down beside me. Ah, how fresh and cool your hand is! Put it on my forehead for a moment. Listen, Georgy. I am in great trouble and embarrassment. I have a considerable sum of money which I—I—which I owe, to make up within six months.

Six months is the limit of time allowed me."

Mrs. Frost shrugged her shoulders with the air of a person who is being bored by unnecessary details. "Well?" she said.

Her husband suppressed his indignation at her indifference, and proceeded:

"During that time I shall have to strain every nerve, to try every means, to scrape together every pound. I shall have——"

"I thought," said Georgina, interrupting him, "that your journey to Naples was to make your fortune. I have not yet perceived any of the fine results that were to flow from it."

"Matters have not gone as I hoped and expected. Still I do not despair even yet. No; far from it. I believe the shares will come all right, if we can but tide over——" He checked himself, after a glance at her face. It was calm, impassive, utterly unsympathising. Her eyes were cast down, and were contemplating the opal bracelet as the arm which it adorned lay gracefully on her lap. Sidney Frost heaved a deep sigh, that ended in something like a moan.

"I don't know whether you are listening to me, or whether you understand me, Georgina?"

"I heard what you said. But I can't see why you should want to take away my opal. I never heard of such a thing. I little expected that such a thing would ever happen to me."

"Be thankful if nothing worse happens to you."

"Worse! What can be worse? I promised to wear the bracelet at Lady Maxwell's, on Wednesday, to show to a friend of hers, a Polish countess who boasts of her jewels. Lady Maxwell had told her of my bracelet, and had said, moreover, that mine was far handsomer than any single opal she had ever seen."

"You must make some excuse to her."

"What excuse can I make? It is too bad!" And Mrs. Frost put her delicate handkerchief to her eyes.

Her husband remained silent; and after a little while she looked up at him in perplexity. She did not often have recourse to tears. But she had hitherto found them infallible in softening Sidney's heart towards her, let him be as angry as he might.

Presently the dinner-gong sounded. After a short pause, Mrs. Frost wiped her eyes, and said, in a cold voice, "Are you not coming to dinner, Sidney?"

"No; it is impossible. I could eat nothing."

"Why not?" asked Georgina, turning her large eyes slowly on him.

"Oh, you have not, of course, observed so trifling a matter; but the fact is, I am very unwell."

"No; I hadn't noticed it," she responded, with cool naïveté.

After an instant's reflection, it struck her that this indisposition might be the cause of her husband's unwonted severity. Sidney was often hot-tempered and cross, but such steady opposition to her wishes she was quite unused to. The opal might not be lost after all. She went to him and touched his forehead with her cool lips.

"Poor Sidney, how hot his head is!" she exclaimed. "I will send you a little soup. Try to take something, won't you?"

He pressed her hand fondly. The least act of kindness from her made him grateful.

"Dear Georgy! She does really love me a little," he thought, as she glided with her graceful step out of the room. And then he began to meditate whether it might not be possible to spare her the humiliation of parting with her bracelet.

But soon a remembrance darted through his mind, which made his head throb, and his heart beat. No, no; it was impossible! Any sacrifice must be made to avoid, if possible, public disgrace and ruin. It would be better for Georgy to give up every jewel she possessed than to confront that final blow. Yes; the sacrifice must be made, for the present. And who could tell what piece of good luck might befall him before the end of the six months?

This was but the beginning of a period of unspeakable anxiety for Frost, during which he suffered alternations of hope and despondency, and feverish expectation and crushing humiliation, and during which he was more and more delivered up to the conviction that his wife was the incarnation of cold egotism. He strove against the conviction. Sometimes he fought with it furiously and indignantly; sometimes he tried to coax and lull it. When he should be finally vanquished by the irrefragable truth, it would go hard with him. Of all this Georgina knew nothing. Had she known, she would have cared; because she would have perceived that when the truth should have overcome the last of her husband's self-delusions it must also go hard with her.

Meanwhile there was anxiety enough—with which Frost was intimately connected—at the house in Gower-street.

Maud and the vicar were gone away to Shipley. The upper rooms were shut up, and the house seemed almost deserted. There had come to be a barrier between Hugh and his mother. It did not appear in their outward behaviour to each other. He was as dutifully, she as tenderly, affectionate as ever. But the unrestrained confidence of their intercourse was at an end. It must always be so when two loving persons speak together with the consciousness of a forbidden topic lying like a naked sword between them. Concealment was so intrinsically antagonistic to Hugh's character, that his mother's aversion to speak confidently with him respecting the confession she had made once for all was extremely painful to him. And his pain, which was evident to her, only served to make her the more reticent. She thought, "My son can never again love me as he loved me before I wounded his pride in me. He is kind still; but I am not to him what I was."

Maud was sadly missed by both mother and son. Her presence in the house had been like the perfume of flowers in a room. Now that she was gone, Zillah often longed for the silent sweetness of her young face. Maud had been able to soften the touch of sternness which marked Hugh's character, and which had in past years sent many a pang of apprehension to his mother's heart as she thought how hard his judgment of her would be when the dreaded moment of confession should arrive. And now the confession had been made, and her son had been loving and forbearing, and had uttered no hint of reproach, and yet—and yet Zillah tormented herself with the thought that she was shut out from the innermost chamber of his heart. Hugh had lost no time in telling his mother of his interview with Mr. Frost. He related all the details of it conscientiously, but without his usual frank spontaneity; for he saw in her face how she shrank from the recital; and in the constraint of his manner, she, on her part, read coldness and estrangement. She felt frightened as she pictured to herself the conflict of those two strong wills. Zillah, too, could be strong; but her strength lay in endurance less than action. And, besides, twenty years of secret self-reproach and the sting of a tormented and tormenting conscience had sapped the firmness of her character.

"You did not show him any mercy, then, Hugh?" she said, with her head leaning against her small pale hand, when her son had finished his narrative.

"Mercy! Yes, mother, surely I showed him more mercy than he deserved! I gave him six months' grace."

"Six months' grace. After five-and-twenty years of procrastination, how short those six months will seem to him!"

"And how long the five-and-twenty years seemed to you! But I told him the facts of the case plainly. The chance of buying the business I have set my heart on will remain open to me for yet half a year longer. If by the end of that time I have not given my answer, the chance will be lost. He *must* repay the money he stole by that time."

"Stole, Hugh! You did not use that word to him?"

"No, mother, I did not use that word; but I should have been justified in using it."

"And how did he—did he seem? Was he angry and defiant, or did he seem secure of his power to pay the money?"

"He was greatly taken by surprise; but he has great self-command. And he is so clever and specious that I do not wonder at his having imposed on you. He tried to take a high hand with me, and reminded me that he had been my father's friend. 'Yes; a false friend,' said I. Then he was silent. I did not reproach him with violence. I could not have brought myself to speak even as harshly as I did, had he met me in a different spirit."

"Do you think he will really have a difficulty in repaying the money? I cannot understand it. He must be rich. Every one says that the firm is so prosperous."

"He recovered himself after a minute or so, and began to expatiate on the brilliant prospects of the speculations in which he is engaged. He waxed eloquent at the sound of his own voice; but I stopped him. 'Deeds, not words, are the only arguments that I can accept from you, Mr. Frost,' said I. 'You have not now got a woman and a child to deal with. I am a man, and I shall exact my own unflinchingly.' Before I left the office, he offered me his hand, but I could not take it."

"You refused his hand? That must have cut him to the quick. He is such a proud man."

"So am I," retorted Hugh, dryly.

Zillah bent silently over her work. Hugh did not see the tears that brimmed up into her eyes. Hugh did not guess the sharp pain that was in her heart. He had so fully and freely forgiven whatever injury his mother's weakness had occasioned to him:

he had such pity in his man's heart for the unmerited sufferings that this frail, delicate, defenceless woman had undergone from her youth upward, that it never entered into his mind how her sensitive conscience made her attribute to herself a large share of the contempt and disgust he expressed for Mr. Frost.

"I am at least an accomplice in defrauding my son of his inheritance!" said the poor woman to herself. "Hugh does not mean to be unkind; but he must feel that all blame thrown upon Sidney Frost reflects on me."

The next time Mrs. Lockwood spoke, it was on an indifferent topic; and her son was hurt that she should so resolutely, as it seemed to him, shut him out from any confidential communion with her.

There needed some link between them; some one who, loving both, should enable them to understand one another. Maud might have done this good office. She might have served them both with head and heart. But Maud was not there, and the days passed heavily in the widow's house.

ART. TALKERS AND DOERS.

"WHAT a contrast between these grand works by the old masters, with their glowing colours and their mellow tones, and the flimsy raw-looking productions of the moderns which we are accustomed to see on these walls! How is it that people can't paint now-a-days? Is there some secret for the mixing of colours, and the preparation of pigments, which has been lost? Are modern eyes less accurate and less discerning than the eyes of old were? Or is it that art has long since reached the culminating point of perfection, and is now in a state of hopeless decline: or, worse, absolutely dead, and galvanised into a faint show of life, which is no life?"

At the exhibition of pictures by old masters, at the Royal Academy, this is the tone of all sorts of people, connected—unprofessionally for the most part—with the art world. These cognoscenti give utterance to sentiments expressive of the sublimest contempt for all that is new in art, and of the most fulsome and indiscriminate worship of all that is old. And these sentiments are put forth, be it remarked, by the said connoisseurs—or "knowers," as the word may be literally rendered—with amazing comfort to them-

selves, and amazing contempt for the feelings of any such unhappy modern professors of art as may happen to be within hearing. Indeed, these "knowers" set themselves in open opposition to the Doers.

Now there can exist no doubt in the mind of any reasonable person that finer work, in certain departments of art, has been produced in old than in modern times. This holds true with regard to all forms of art. The Iliad, the Parthenon, the Elgin Marbles, are grander specimens in their different kinds than any which have been produced since. So again, it may be said of the religious painting of the middle ages and of the period which next succeeded them, that it, in its peculiar way, has never been surpassed. The fact is, however, by no means to be fairly quoted in evidence of the decay of painting generally. A fair chronological survey of the history of art will always show that it has various developments, and goes through various phases; and that it passes on from one to another of these, in implicit obedience to that fundamental law of change and progress which affects all things.

That certain branches of art have been brought to greater perfection in former times than they ever attain now, may, then, be safely asserted by the modern critic; but he should by no means go further than this. Unfortunately a great many critics of this our day do go further, and much further. They assert, on behalf of the ancient masters, a claim to an amount of superiority over the modern which is overstrained and exaggerated. They admit of no defects in the former, and allow of no merits in the latter. Yet, that there might be assigned, with perfect fairness, a considerable share of both, to both, might easily be proved by an impartial examination of those very pictures at Burlington House. In that collection there can be no doubt that there are pictures by old masters of unsurpassed and unsurpassable excellence. Such a portrait, for instance, as that of Andrade, by Murillo, is alike magnificent, whether regarded as a mere piece of painting, or as a faithful rendering of strong individuality. Nothing, again, can be more exquisite than some of the Vandykes; especially the well-known three heads of Charles the First. They are beautiful beyond praise as mere works of art, and are so perfectly right and satisfying as delineations of character that it seems as though the value of physiognomy as a science were for ever established by the correspondence between face and

character, of which these portraits give so admirable an illustration. Of such pictures—and many more in this collection might be included with them—no expressions of admiration, however strong, can be regarded as overstrained: except only such as claim for them a degree of merit with which no art of more recent date may venture to compete. Yet, strange to say, there are those who do demand this position for them, in the teeth of the strongest evidence of the successful rivalry of the old masters by the comparatively new. That any admirer of the old masters, however fervent, should assert their unapproachable superiority, having two such pictures before him as the Tragic Muse and the Blue Boy—not to mention others by the same masters—would seem almost impossible. For, surely, the merit of these two works is not inferior to that of any of the pictures exhibited in this gallery. Indeed, in the case of the Siddons portrait, there is in one respect a certain superiority over those other masterpieces. There is a soul painted here, as well as a body: a soul, too, in the highest condition of spiritual exaltation. There is no such instance of painted thought, of a glance of the mind into the spiritual world, in this collection, or perhaps in any other. In this regard, there is positive superiority on the part of the Reynolds picture to the works by old masters exhibited here. In other respects, this and the Gainsborough Blue Boy are simply not better and not worse than the finest of the pictures around them; since what may be said of the finest among the "old masters"—that they are simply of the highest order of merit attainable in this world—must be said, too, of these comparatively modern productions.

It is, probably, from a conviction entertained by the exclusive admirers of the ancient masters, that any admission of a claim on the part of such moderns as Reynolds and Gainsborough to an equality of merit with the older painters, might injure their whole case, that such claim is sturdily resisted by the fraternity of knowers. What an interruption in the course of that continuous decline, which these knowing ones love to dwell on, would be effected by the appearance on the scene, at a period so late as the end of the eighteenth century, of two artists capable of producing work as fine as that of Titian or Vandyke! To make any such concession would be ruinous. The simplest way is to deny to more recent art achievements all right

to rank with the more remote. "What! Compare a Reynolds or a Gainsborough with a Murillo or a Titian! Is it possible that you can see the works of both schools, hanging side by side, and not detect at a glance the inferiority of the modern to the old? Have you eyes? Can you, after feasting on Murillo, derive any satisfaction whatever from a contemplation of the old lady with the green umbrella, whose portrait hangs in the opposite corner? Almost as well admire those Leslies in the next room, and own yourself a Vandal at once."

"Those Leslies"! How lightly esteemed by the knowers, yet how full of beauties peculiar to themselves, and of merits belonging exclusively to the modern time!

There are some opinions on subjects of the day which spread among us like an infectious disease. These opinions issue for the most part from certain circles in London, which set the fashion in matters of taste, just as Brummel or D'Orsay did once in connexion with dress and personal decoration. It is the custom of these virtuosi to form themselves into a little committee, and to sit in judgment upon all works of art, pictorial, literary, musical, or dramatic: pronouncing, after due deliberation, a verdict which the rest of "the world," always glad to get hold of ready-made opinions, is very willing to accept. The verdict of these taste-arbitrators has gone against the pictures, by Leslie and Stanfield, exhibited, among the old masters, on the Academy walls. They are said to suffer to a pitiable extent by comparison with the works in the midst of which they are placed, and are accused of appearing raw, crude, and flimsy, by contrast. But, surely, on a little consideration, it might appear plain that there is abundant room for appeal against this verdict. The principal charge against these pictures is that they are deficient in that uniformity and harmony of general tint which characterises the old masters; but does not this simply amount to an accusation that they are without what it is simply impossible that they could yet have got—that general softness and unity of tone, which nothing but the lapse of time can bestow? The effect of time in bringing together the different parts of a picture, and in blending them into a homogeneous mass, is powerful and unmistakable. It does not seem too much to say that if, by means of some unknown scientific process, the effect brought about by the lapse of two or three centuries could be produced in as many hours, and some modern pictures

could be subjected to it, they would present the very same mellow and harmonious aspect which we admire so much in the works of the older painters; while if, on the other hand, those very pictures by old masters could be put through an exactly inverse process, and deprived of all that they have gained by lapse of time, and seen as they came fresh from the easel, they would be denounced for possessing that very rawness and discordancy against which fierce exception is taken.

Such objectors most frequently give their judgments to the world, not through the medium of printers' ink and paper, but *viva voce*, by means of Talk. There is a large class in this town of these knowing Talkers. They hold forth at dinner-tables; they sicken the soul at Private Views, and other art assemblies; and they not unfrequently treat the Doers with pitying condescension. "You have a certain amount of mechanical skill;" thus the Talkers hold forth to the Doers; "you have a knack of representing what you see before you; you can turn out a picture painted with considerable dexterity, and can get a large sum of money for it; but you are grossly ignorant of your profession in all but its business aspect. You know nothing of the history of art, nothing of the distinguishing characteristics of the different schools; the refinements of colouring and of handling exhibited in the works of the 'masters' are a dead letter to you. From you, the Doer, these things are hidden; but to me, the Talker, they are revealed. Do not, therefore, expect me to pay any deference to your Doings, which are merely the result of knack; but, on the contrary, do you defer humbly to my Talkings: which emanate from an amount of art knowledge, art perception, and art theory, of which you have not so much as an inkling."

But the strangest thing is, that this tendency to treat of modern art as of a thing in the lowest condition of decadence is not entirely confined to the amateur critic, but is sometimes participated in by the artist himself. There are artists, as well as amateurs, who talk in this despondent tone. "What is the use," say they, "of anything that we can do? We can never approach those master-pieces produced by the great men of former times. This is not an age whose natural way of expressing itself is through the medium of art. It is not *the* thing of the day, as it was once."

Such reasoning as this—if such weak

complaining is to be called reasoning—is surely indicative of a very small grasp of mind. What if art be not *the* thing of the day? What if it have to enter into competition with science, commerce, mechanics, and a hundred other interests? This is a day, not of one thing, but of many things; and art is one of the many. Religion is not *the* thing of the day, as it is supposed to have been in what are called the “ages of faith.” Yet it is much to be questioned whether the influence of real, practical, vital religion were ever greater than at this moment. War, again, is not *the* thing of the day, as it was once; yet whenever it happens that fighting becomes necessary, there seems no reason to complain of our not knowing how to do it. Just so it is with art. The art which was devoted to what are called devotional subjects may have seen its best days; but are there not, *per contra*, some developments of modern art which are quite peculiar to it, and which have belonged to no previous period of art-existence? The painting of pictures, rendered intensely interesting by the dramatic nature of the scenes they represent, and by the expression of various passions and emotions in the faces of the actors in such scenes, is a comparatively modern development of art, and dates almost entirely from the time of Hogarth. Is this a small thing for the art of the new time to have achieved? What picture by any of the old masters is dramatically interesting? They charm by their rare technical excellences, by their beauty of form, colour, and *chiar’oscuro*, and often by a delicious sentiment which pervades them, and which is produced we know not altogether how. But they certainly do not appeal to our imaginative faculties by reason of any special interest attaching to the scenes they represent, or to the persons by whom those scenes are enacted. With the old painter the manner of representing was everything; with the new, the thing represented is the more important. Let the due amount of credit be given to each, for what each has done. It is, to say the least, an open question whether any result achieved by Titian, or even Raphael, is of really higher artistic value than the figure of the dying husband in Hogarth’s *Marriage à la Mode*, or that of the Catholic girl in Millais’s *Saint Bartholomew’s Day*. These are great doings; so were the doings of the older artists; and to disparage either because it is not the other, is to be both unfair and illogical.

That this introduction of the dramatic element into art may fairly be claimed for the modern school is easily demonstrable; for though in a very few cases, as in that of Raphael’s *Death of Ananias*, and some other instances, the telling of a story and the exhibition of human emotion was one of the tasks which the painter of the old time set himself to execute, it must still be admitted that such attempts were exceptional, and by no means to be regarded as essential features of the art of the time. For the most part, Religious and Devotional Subjects, Representations of Holy Families, Incidents in the Lives of the Patriarchs of the Old Testament or the Saints of the New, were the themes chosen for illustration by the old painters. These were varied, occasionally, by pictures illustrative of History, or the Heathen Mythology, not more likely to interest the spectator than the others. These pictures move us not by causing us to be absorbed in the fortunes of the men and women represented in them, but simply by their intrinsic beauty as works of art. That other achievement of interesting us in the lives of human creatures having no existence but in the imagination of the artist, was reserved for such despised moderns as Hogarth, Wilkie, and others, who invented their own stories, and told them on canvas with such power of realisation as makes us almost forget the excellence of their pictures as works of art, in our admiration of the wonderful imaginative intuition which can so awaken our interest in their *dramatis personæ*.

In the first fervour of the pursuit of what was dramatic in art, the cultivation of the exclusively picturesque may have been somewhat lost sight of; but of late there has been a revival in this respect also, and a revival, moreover, of such vigour that it is not too much to assert that there are living men, both in England and in France, whose works, making allowance for their necessary deficiency in the harmonising influences of time, might compete, in all artistic qualities of colour, form, light and shade, delicacy and truth of execution, with any of the master-pieces of the old painters of Italy, Spain, or the Low Countries.

It would not be possible, within the limits of an article such as this, to maintain all that might be maintained in defence of the right of modern art to be regarded as one of the important features of the age we live in. Enough to show that it is a living reality, not a dead thing galvanised into a mimicry of life;

enough to counteract, to some small extent, the discouraging effect of those doleful lamentations over the decay of modern art to which the members of the Dilettanti world are so clearly addicted. The responsibility which attaches to any one, the business of whose life it is to *discourage*, is heavy. It would be a far more profitable employment of the critic's time and abilities, to examine in what respects modern art has the advantage over old, and what things the painter of the new time can do which he of the old could not. The humble Doer has difficulties to contend with, of which the audacious Talker knows nothing. It is more difficult to do ever so little, than to talk ever so much; and the most diminutive of Doers has the right to take precedence of the most gigantic of Talkers.

THE OLD TREE IN NORBURY PARK.

THE POET. Come forth from thine encircling bole,
O Dryad of the Tree!
That stands upon the grassy knolle,
The pride of all the lea.

Thy home is stately to behold,
And, measured by its rings,
Has flourish'd on the breezy world
For eighteen hundred springs;

For eighteen hundred years has drunk
The balm the skies contain,
And fed its broad imperial trunk
With sunshine and the rain.

At least, so learned gardeners guess,
And prove it to themselves
By woodman's craft, and more or less
Book-knowledge from their shelves.

And if thou'st lived but half as long,
There's much thou must have seen,
Which thou couldst whisper in a song,
From all thy branches green!

Come, then; obedient to my call,
With eyes of flashing light,
Agile, and debonnaire, and tall,
And pleasant to the sight!

I'll listen, if thou wilt but talk,
And follow through thy speech
Tradition's visionary walk,
And all that histories teach.

And looking up the stream of Time,
Where bygone centuries frown,
Will strive, with arrogance sublime,
To look as far adown.

II

THE TREE. When first I sprouted from the Earth,
Imperial Rome was young;
And ere I had a strong man's girth,
Her knell of doom had rung.

A Roman warrior planted me
On this sequestered hill;
And Rome's a dream of History,
While I am stalwart still.

Beneath my young o'erarching boughs
The Druids oft have stray'd;
And painted Britons breathed their vows,
Love-smitten in the shade.

When good King Alfred foil'd the Dane,
I flourish'd where I stand;
When Harold fell, untimely slain,
And strangers filch'd the land,
I cast my shadow on the grass,
And yearly, as I grew,
Beheld the village maidens pass
Light-footed o'er the dew.

I saw the Red Rose and the White
Do battle for the crown,
And in the sanguinary fight
Mow men like harvests down.

And as the work of Life and Death
Went on o'er all the realm,
I stood unharmed, no axe to scathe,
No flood to overwhelm.

The teeming people lived and died,
The people great and free;
And years, like ripples on the tide,
Flowed downwards to the sea,

Yet seemed to me, outlasting all,
To leave their work behind,
And make their notches, great and small,
Of progress for mankind;

Though oft the growth of happier time
Seemed slow and sorely wrought,
And noble actions failed to climb
The heights of noble Thought.

But let me be of hopeful speech!
I feel that Time shall bring
To men and nations, all and each,
The renovating spring!

III.

THE POET. Well said, old Tree! We'll look before,
And seek not to recall
The stories of the days of yore,
So melancholy all.

Ah no! we'll rather strive to think,
If yet, five hundred years,
Thou'rt left to stand upon the brink,
Amid thy younger peers,

What thoughts and deeds, both linked in birth,
Shall work to mighty ends,
Amid the nations of the Earth,
The foemen and the friends;

What changes Fate shall slowly launch
On Time's unresting river;
What little germs take root and branch,
And flourish green for ever;

What struggling nations shall be great,
What great ones shall be small,
Or whether Europe, courting Fate,
Shall crumble to its fall.

Perchance, if any chance there be
In God's eternal plan,
There may evolve new History,
And nobler life for man.

Such hopes be ours—the high, the deep,
O Spirit of the Tree!
And yet, I think, I'd like to sleep
For centuries two or three,

To learn, when wakened into light,
What marvels had been done
Since I had bidden Time good-night,
And quarrel'd with the sun:

To learn if England, growing yet,
Still held her ancient place;
Or if her brilliant star had set
In splendour or disgrace:

To learn if Empire travelling West,
Beyond old Ocean's links,
Had marched from Better into Best,
And riddled out the Sphinx;

Re-reading with acuter gloss
 Time's puzzles downwards cast,
 And reconciling gain with loss,
 The Future with the Past :

To learn if Earth, more deftly wrought,
 Could nurture all her brood ;
 With utmost sustenance of Thought,
 And pabulum of food :

Or, coming down to smaller aims,
 To know if full-grown Steam
 Had stitched the Hudson to the Thames,
 As tailors would a seam ;

Or whether men, who walk and swim,
 Had learned to float and fly,
 And imitate the cherubim,
 Careering through the sky.

Or whether Chemistry had packed
 The lightning into gems,
 For girls to wear amid their hair,
 Like regal diadems ;

Or whether, noblest birth of Time !
 The creed that Jesus taught
 Had gathered in its fold sublime
 All human life and thought.

Alas ! O Spirit of the Tree !
 Thy days are fair and long,
 And mine too short to hope to see
 The issues of my song.

Yet Hope is long, and Hopes are strong,
 And grow to what they seem,
 And help to shape the coming years,
 O Dryad of my dream !

SOME ITALIAN NOVELLE.

IN TWO CHAPTERS. CHAPTER I.

I FELT ill in an out-of-the-way place at the foot of the Apennines ; my convalescence was slow, and was accompanied by great weakness. I tried to read, but the print seemed to dance before my eyes. The total loss of occupation distressed me much, and added to my discomfort. Seeing this, a peasant girl, whom we had turned into a lady's maid, volunteered to overcome her shyness and to tell me some "Novelle." "You will excuse, signora," she said, "the silliness of these tales. When we are children, our grandmothers tell them by the fireside, in the winter evenings; and they, again, heard them in the same way, from the old women before them, who did not know how to read. So they are not like the fine stories you read in your books."

At the word "Novelle" I pricked up my ears, for I knew learned men, who had laboured for years together, to add to their store of popular tales. It is needless to say that the Italian word *Novella* is equivalent to *Saga*, *Walshebene Skaski*, *Märchen*, *Fabliaux*, &c., and it is more than probable that our word "novel" springs from it, although very dissimilar in meaning. The latter professes to portray incidents which pertain to real life; the former means essentially a fairy tale. It may be a tale

without fairies, but it must be a tissue in which the natural and supernatural are closely interwoven, the latter preponderating. The principal interest of these "Novelle" lies in their philological bearing. The same tales may be recognised in every country, allowing for the difference of national characteristics. These few "Novelle," written out almost word for word from the peasant girl's narrative, may therefore prove welcome to collectors of this special kind of literature, if only for the resemblance they bear to their sisters of other countries.

THE THREE BALLS OF GOLD.

THERE was once upon a time a man who had three handsome daughters, and, when they had done the house-work they combed their hair, and sat at the window. One day, a young man passed along the road; and when he saw these pretty maidens, he went in and asked the father for the eldest. The maiden gladly consented, because the young man was good-looking; the father, because he was rich. The wedding was celebrated, and the husband and wife went away. When the bride arrived at the sumptuous palace which was to be her home, two days were taken up in examining the beautiful things it contained. On the third day, the husband told his wife he must leave her, as he had a weekly tour to take, on account of his affairs; but, said he, "Here is a golden ball; place it in your bosom, and keep it till my return." He then took her all over the house once more, and stopped before an iron door, of which he showed her the key. "Mind you do not open this door on any account," he said; "for if you did open it, we should never meet again."

He then started on his journey. The first day was passed well enough by the bride; but on the second day her thoughts constantly turned to the forbidden door. Much wronged she thought herself at last for having been forbidden anything at all. So she bravely took the mysterious key, and, after a moment of hesitation, turned the lock and pushed the door. She had hardly time to see anything; for a dense ascending smoke blinded her. She threw herself back, locked the door, and fell on the marble pavement. When she came to herself, and perceived that the gold ball had fallen from her gown, she rapidly replaced it in her bosom, smoothed her hair, and sat down to await the return of her husband.

It was a stormy evening, and it grew stormier and darker still, as the moment of his arrival drew near.

"Well, my wife, where is your golden ball?" said the young man, before saying so much as good evening, as he shook off his long dark cloak. She held it out to him. As he noticed that it had had a fall, he laughed a fierce laugh, Aha, aha! "Now, my wife, you may come to see what is behind the iron door." And taking hold of her wrists, he dragged her, notwithstanding all her screams, towards it, opened it, and threw her into the smoke, from which flames arose; crying out, "One more!" He then locked the door, which was that of the bottomless pit, and he, the evil spirit, went out, satisfied with his work; for, besides his wife, he had caught a great many people that day.

The sisters of the bride were still unmarried, so this good-looking man went to the house, in deep mourning, and told the poor father that his daughter was dead.

"I have been so happy with her, however," said the rogue, "that I hope you will allow me, when the time comes, to choose again out of your family." And with a deep bow, he took his leave.

The second sister was very glad to marry the young man, so at the end of the year of mourning he came to claim her as his bride. The second sister was as unlucky with her golden ball as her sister had been, and so nothing more was heard of her. At the end of another year the widower came to claim the hand of the youngest and prettiest sister.

It was a fine bright day as the pair started in their comfortable carriage, followed by the blessings of the thenceforward lonely father. No presentiments of her fate alarmed the bride. She chatted gaily, and when, after two days' journey, the large castle appeared before her, she praised its beauty without noticing its forbidding appearance. Next day the young man left her, as he had left her two sisters, on a journey of business, and, taking from his pocket a new golden ball and the key of the iron door, he left them, with the usual warning, in her hands.

The rumbling noise of his departing carriage had hardly ceased, when the bride ran to the iron door; but, remembering the golden ball, she carefully placed it in the corn-sieve. She then unlocked the door. Undaunted by the smoke, and by noisome smells, she looked down into a large hole, and heard sighs and groans; and amongst

the voices she recognised those of her two sisters, and of their aunt, who had disappeared some years before. Not losing her presence of mind, she called out to them to take courage, for she had come to help them; and, running to the well, she brought away the rope, and, letting it down, pulled them up, one by one. Having carefully locked the door, she hurried them away to one of the towers of the castle. She still had two days before her, until the return of her husband, and these she employed in the following manner. She arranged that her meals should always be brought to her in the first room of the tower, and she had a holy image made and placed on the wall of the tower. When her husband came back, he embraced her very affectionately, and asked her what she had been about, and how she had taken care of the golden ball. She took it out of her dress, and showed it to him. Of course it was perfectly sound, and he was very much satisfied.

"You are the only clever woman I have ever met with," he said, "and that is not saying little. But what have you done to the tower?"

"I have only chosen it as my private apartment, and have had a pretty piece of sculpture placed in it. Will you come and see it?" But her husband drew back, and assured her he much preferred the other part of the house.

And there they all live to this very day, the aunt and the sisters, in the tower, which is never visited by the master of the house. And the bride never showed that she knew the terrible nature of her husband's occupation. She could not have mended matters by doing so; he would only have thrown her into that dreadful pit. So she bears her lot, just like any other sensible woman, for the sake of quiet.

THE MASON'S WIFE.

A MASON had a deceitful wife, cruel and avaricious. She also wished to curry favour with the priests, for then, she thought, all her sins would be remitted. In favour of any one of the priesthood she would relax her stinginess: nay, she would even become recklessly extravagant. The mason's gains were fair. He was a good workman, but his work took him so much from home that she had it all her own way, both in the management of the house, and of an only son. Every week the husband gave his earnings to his wife, and every day she gave him a large piece of

brown bread and a very small piece of cheese. For drink, why, he had the fountain, she said, and very good water it was. As for wine, it only made a man's head heavy; and as for better food, why, they couldn't afford it. Was there not the house-rent? was there not the lad's clothing and schooling, and what not beside? So the good man went his way, and thanked Heaven, and was not aware of all the bad qualities of his wife.

A fat friar was in the habit of passing often by the cottage, and was always requested to lay aside his heavy linen bag, filled with the alms of charitable souls, and rest. This he did after much puffing, and panting, and complaining of the dust of the road, of the fatigue of walking bare-foot, of the decrease of true believers, of hunger and of thirst. On these occasions the woman would run and kill her fattest fowl, and would take the fresh-laid eggs and make an omelette. Some slices of bacon and the best fruit in the garden would complete this dainty repast. Then, after many blessings given and received, the monk would proceed on his journey, promising another visit on another day. These repasts were much to the taste of the little boy, and the days that brought the monk were days of rejoicing in his calendar. He would run to meet his father, smacking his lips, and saying:

"Oh, what a feast we have had! What a feast we have had!"

At first, the father took no notice of these words; but as time grew, and the lad grew, the latter added further details to his description of the mysterious dinner. So his father one day on his return asked who the monk was, who called during his absence, and was it true that he had had a splendid dinner given him?

"Nonsense," exclaimed the wife, in great anger; "if you believe every word the lad tells you, there will be a fine business indeed. A dinner, forsooth! As if I could afford to give any one a dinner! A piece of bread and an onion is my best meal." So saying, she went out and caught her son by the ear, and gave him a good beating. "If ever you mention the friar again, I will make you black and blue all over; that will be the second time; and the third time I will kill you. So do you mind your own business."

For a little while, all went on well; but the lad was still too young to be prudent, and one day he again ran to meet his father, and recounted the good things they

had had to eat in his absence: crowning the whole by the description of a dish of macaroni, calculated to drive a hungry man desperate. Again the mason asked his wife:

"Has any one been here, and have you been cooking, and who is the friar?"

She turned the conversation for a moment, and then ran away to wreak her vengeance on the tell-tale. The poor boy was indeed black and blue all over, and for some days he could not leave his little room; but the youth got the better of the beating, and of all prudence too. In course of time he forgot his mother's threats, and one day, when he had gone to help his father, he told him that the holy man had been at the cottage the day before, that all the good things had been given to him, and that besides he had carried away with him a whole loaf and a bottle of wine. The rage of the mason knew no bounds. He went home in a state of anger not to be described; and yet the positive assertions of his wife outweighed the lad's statement. Nothing else happened on that day; but when her husband had gone to his work next morning, the woman called the boy, and bade him get ready, for she was going to see her old aunt, and would take her a loaf of home-made bread. So the lad got ready, and followed her, after having stuffed both his pockets (he had only two) with knuckle-bones and marbles. They trudged on several miles in a forest, of which all the trees were like each other; and lucky it was for the boy that he had a hole in his pocket, and that one by one the marbles and knuckle-bones deserted their resting-place; for on the summit of a hill the woman rolled the loaf down, and, telling him it had fallen from her hands, asked him to go and fetch it.

In the mean while she returned home by a path that she knew, quite sure that the boy would lose his way. But the marbles and bones showed the lad his road back, and he got home safely with the loaf. His mother said nothing, but was sorely grieved that this attempt at losing the lad had failed; however, she hoped for better luck next time, and in the mean while she kept her anger under control.

"I think our aunt would like a cheese better than a loaf," she said, one day; "let us go off at once, as it is fine, and let us hope for better luck than last time."

The lad assented, never understanding the drift of that wicked hope; and off they went, the woman with a nice round cheese

under her shawl, and the lad unprovided with marbles on account of the short notice. On they went, up hill and down dale, until it seemed to the boy that they had walked the whole day. The sun seemed to be setting, but the woman still urged him on and on. At last she saw they were standing on sloping ground, so she rolled down the cheese, as if it had escaped from her hands, sent him after it, and while he ran down on one side she turned back on the other. The country was thickly wooded, but she knew it well, and after many windings through the forest arrived at the cottage. There she found her husband awaiting her, and there and then she invented the most dismal story. They had lost themselves in the wood, she said; then she had asked her son to wait a few minutes at the foot of a tree while she went to see which of two cross-paths they were to take. She remained away, only a few minutes, she said, and on returning to the spot where she had left him, she found he was gone. "Do not make yourself uneasy," she added, "for the lad is sure to come home." But days, weeks, months, passed, and at last years, and the lad never came home. The mason mourned for his son, and the fat friar enjoyed his dinners undisturbed, and got fatter. But the justice of Heaven never slumbers.

And now to return to the boy, and take him up from the moment when his cruel mother deserted him. He ran down the hill, after the cheese; but as it was as round as a wheel, it kept on rolling, and rolling, and bounding, and bounding, and never stopped till it got on flat ground. The lad, excited by the chase, never thought of time or distance. But when he had to wend his way slowly through furze and brush-wood, and when the darkness began to lower, his heart failed him, and he burst into tears. When he had got to the top of the hill it was night, and there was no moon. The lad at last cried himself to sleep, and lay at the foot of the nearest tree. When the dawn broke, he awoke as if something had pushed against his back. He sat up, rubbed his eyes, looked at the tree against which he had rested during the night, and, to his amazement, saw a little door open, from which a little green dwarf emerged.

"I am the spirit of the wood," he said; "and who are you?"

Then the boy told his sad tale, and asked the dwarf if he could put him on his road; but the dwarf shook his head, and told him he was a silly boy, that he would be got

rid of in a still more cruel manner if he returned home.

"Open your eyes to the real state of things. Stay in the wood," said the dwarf, "and you shall be revenged. Stay in the wood, and I may bring you those who have injured you." Then he gave the lad some chestnuts, and some water fresh from a spring close by. He then led him to a little hut. It contained all the necessities of life, and on the table lay a gun and a flute. "This gun will bring down all the game you can want, and this flute will make any one dance at your bidding," said the dwarf.

Years rolled on, and the boy grew into a young man. One day, a fat monk chanced to pass through the wood. He came up to the hut. The young man knew him at once, and anger boiled in his heart. The monk, however, could not recognise the boy; he looked quite another person now, he was so much taller, stouter, and darker. So the monk begged for alms, and promised many benedictions in return.

"Alas, holy father!" said the young man, "I had but one piece of money, and it might have lasted me a long time; but I dropped it in that thicket of thorns yonder. I am afraid of venturing in the thicket; but if you have the heart to look for the piece of money there, it shall be yours."

The greedy monk at once rushed to the thicket, and stooped under it, crawling on all fours. When he was fairly in the midst of the thorny bush, the young man took his flute and began to play. Up stood the monk through briars and thorns, compelled to dance, and to tear himself and his clothes to rags. Higher and higher he jumped and capered, crying for mercy, while the blood streamed from him on every side. But his cries for mercy were unheeded, and the pitiless youth played faster and faster till the monk expired. Then the lad fled from the wood, on the wings of vengeance, without forgetting the magic flute. Something urged him onward. It seemed as if he suddenly knew all the paths of the forest. A day's journey brought him back to his native village, and a few minutes more brought him to the cottage where his parents still lived. Trusting to his altered appearance, he knocked at the door. Husband and wife were at home.

"Will you give some supper and a night's rest, to a weary traveller willing to pay?" he said, in a feigned voice.

"You are welcome," they both answered.

The table was laid; and as the meal went on, the stranger grew communicative.

"I have much on my mind," he said; "you seem to be good people, and if you are not tired I should like to tell you my story, and to ask your advice."

"By all means," they answered; "in what we can do, command us."

"You must know," he began, "that though I am young, I am a married man and a father; but it would have been better for me had I remained single. I have a wicked wife. She has deprived me of our only child. Her purpose was, either to kill it, or to give it as a prey to the wild beasts; for she left her house one day with it, and came back without it. She deceives me in every possible manner, and I have fled from the house to meditate a fitting punishment for her."

The mason sat thinking over the stranger's words.

"Alas!" he said, sadly, "we, also, had a son once."

The guilty wife looked as pale as death. It seemed strange to her that so many points of the young man's story should recal to her mind her past sin. While the pair sat musing, the young man repeated, in a louder voice:

"What punishment does the deceiver deserve?"

"Burn her to death!" cried the husband.

"Burn her to death!" cried the wife, who wished to appear innocent in the eyes of her husband, and therefore repeated: "Burn her to death!"

"Then pile up the fagots on your hearth!" cried the stranger, in a fearful voice, "for the day of justice has come. Pile up the fagots! If you have the fire, I have the criminal."

And before the astonished husband could come to the rescue, he had tied the wife's hands with a cord, and had thrown her in the midst of the burning pile. He then explained to his father all the circumstances in a few hurried words, and, taking the flute from his pocket, began to play. But the woman was already quite dead, for her heart had burst from shame and remorse.

THE CRUEL MOTHER.

THERE was once a woman who had a little daughter about fourteen years old, a very fair maiden to see. She hated this girl because she was prettier than she had ever been in her own youth. Every night she went to bed, leaving the girl at her spinning; and if the girl had not done her

task in the morning, she received many stripes. One night her mother gave her a large bag full of flax. "This," she said, "must be spun by to-morrow morning, or I will kill you." On this, she went comfortably to bed. The girl leaned her head on the table, and cried as if her heart would break. She knew it was useless to attempt to do the work in so short a time, so she prayed that she might die. As she prayed, she heard a gentle knock. It seemed near the fireplace. She had only just said, "Come in!" when a pretty little lady, all dressed in gold tissue, stood before her.

"Why do you cry, little maiden?" said she. "Your sobs have reached all the way to me, in fairyland. I can help you. Tell me your grief."

"Oh!" sobbed the maiden, "I have all this flax to spin before morning, and if it is not done my mother will kill me."

"Go to bed, go to bed, child," said the fairy. "I will spin your flax for you."

The little maiden was glad to throw herself on her little bed, and powerless even to thank her benefactress. She fell asleep in a moment. In the mean while, the little fairy sat and spun, sat and spun, all the night long, till the day broke. She then vanished, leaving all the thread made up into nice tidy parcels. In the morning came in the cruel mother, and asked for the spun thread in a very gruff voice.

"Here it is," said the trembling maiden.

"I must weigh it, I must weigh it," retorted her mother; "for, should it be wanting even of half an ounce, you shall have your beating."

But, strange to say, the thread was rather heavier than the woman expected: so she had nothing more to say. On the succeeding evening, she dragged into the room two enormous bags of flax.

"This must be done by the morning," she said, "or beware!"

She then closed the door and left the maiden alone, having previously thrown a stale bit of black bread into the room. Then, indeed, did the girl weep and sob: no one, she thought, could help her now, and what was she to do! But at midnight, when all except the maiden slept, the same knock, followed by a gentle "May we come in?" comforted her failing heart. In tripped two fairies, and in a moment they had put the girl to bed, and then they sat and spun, sat and spun, all the night long, and she went to sleep looking at the pretty creatures who had ivory distaffs and spindles, and

tiny white hands. In the morning, as usual, her mother came in to weigh the thread; and again it was over weight.

"You graceless witch!" she snorted, "you complained of over-work, and it is all too little for such a minx as you."

Away she went, banging the door, and the maiden sat weeping and biting at a hard loaf, too hard for her little teeth. In the evening her mother came in three times, each time dragging behind her a very large bagful of flax.

"Now, mark you!" she said. "If all this is spun and made into skeins by daybreak, I give you no more work, and you may be as idle as you like; but if you do not finish this, I will kill you: that is my decision."

The maiden sat immovable till midnight, "For," thought she, "either the fairies will come and I shall be saved, or they will not come any more, and I shall die." But at midnight the faithful fairy came, accompanied by two other fairies: just as if she guessed that there were three bagfuls to spin. First of all they made the poor girl's bed comfortable, and then they each gave her a kiss. She fell asleep; and when the morning broke, the work was done.

It was Sunday morning; for the first time, the poor girl was not scolded. Her mother arrayed herself in her best clothes, and said she was going to church.

"Pray take me too!" entreated the girl. "I have not been to church for so long."

"Do you think I would take you dressed in those rags?" answered her mother.

If the girl were in rags, it was the mother's fault. But off she started in a great hurry, because the church was three miles off. The young girl, left as usual to herself, knelt down to say her prayers, when a familiar voice called out: "May I come in?" And, to the girl's delight, in walked the fairy.

"So you would like to go to church?" she said. "And to church you shall go."

Saying those words, the fairy touched the girl with her wand, and, as the rags dropped off, the most magnificent clothes took their place, and her face became so much more lovely, that, pretty as she had been before, no one would have known her.

"Go down-stairs, and you will find a carriage," said the fairy; and disappeared.

Half bewildered by the events of the last few days, the girl went down the creaking stairs, and found at the door a fine carriage with four horses and two coachmen. She got in, and they, without asking any questions, drove her to the church. It was a

little village church, and everybody around was well known; so that the arrival of a great princess created a great sensation, and everybody looked at her during mass. After the service she drove back; the carriage and the fine clothes disappeared; and she had hardly resumed her rags when the mother walked in.

"Such a sight!" she exclaimed: "such a grand sight. There was a great lady—perhaps the queen—at church. Everybody looked at her."

"Was she at all like me, mother?" asked the girl.

"Like you indeed!" said the woman, laughing most scornfully. "A good joke! You, forsooth, like the handsomest lady in the land, who wears silks and satins every day! You, who are but a dirty slut, fit only to stay at home and open the door!"

So the girl said nothing more. Next Sunday she again begged to go to church, and got the same answer as before; and again, when her mother was gone, the friendly fairy appeared. This time the clothes with which she decked the maiden were far more splendid than last time. And her slippers were of pure gold. The carriage was more splendid, the horses were all white, and the coachmen were like princes of the land. Everybody, in the church and out of the church, stared at the beautiful stranger. As she left the church in a hurry, she was followed by a crowd, her mother in the midst of it, to see her get into her carriage. In her hurry she ran on a few steps, and, in getting into the carriage, dropped one of her golden slippers. Her mother was sharp, and seized this shoe before any one in the crowd had perceived her movement; "for," thought she, "it must be made of real gold, and I can sell it to-morrow. Is it, or is it not, real gold?" she went on repeating to herself, as she turned the slipper round and round in her hands.

The girl hurried home as fast as her beautiful horses could prance, and, before her mother came in, she had already put on her old clothes, and also had had a short conversation with the fairy.

"Look at this," said the mother, holding the slipper under her nose.

"Why that is my slipper, I declare!" answered the daughter.

"I always thought you were rather mad," answered the mother. "Your slipper, indeed, you conceited ape! why you could not put half your hand in it."

Then the maiden took the shoe, and put

it on her tiny foot, and, taking up its fellow from a hiding-place—for the fairy had purposely left her the other slipper—she showed them both to the astonished woman.

"Yes, mother, I am the lady who goes to church; I am the lady of the fine carriage and the fine horses. Do you think that, because you do not care for me, there is not One above who sees justice done in this world?"

The enraged woman, blind with jealousy and anger, pushed the girl out of the door.

"Remember, mother," said the girl, looking back, "that you sent me away. And never more do I return."

"And a good riddance too," retorted the woman, with a parting kick.

So the maiden went far away, and the fairies gave her all that she could wish, and all that she deserved—a fine palace, kind friends, dainty dishes, fine clothes, attentive servants, and, in course of time, a young and handsome husband.

LIGHT FOR LIGHTHOUSES.

As far as regards lighthouse illumination, the light of other days seems to have been of very little account. The means adopted by our forefathers and by the ancients for marking the coasts by night were of a very rough and inefficient kind. The necessity for lights of some description to mark by night the shores of civilised countries has manifested itself wherever navigation has been practised, and one may read of several towers of old which were made to answer the purposes of lighthouses. Our own ancestors, as they began to journey on the sea, found something of the kind necessary, and blazing beacons were lighted on many of the high hills and prominent headlands on the coasts of Britain. There is no knowing how many fagots of wood or tons of coal were consumed by these fires, but the quantity no doubt was very large. However, the progress of science, or whatever power it may be which ordains great changes and improvements, at last abolished this system of coal fires, and during the latter part of last century established oil lights instead.

It was an immense improvement when steady lights under cover were substituted for the coal fires, and no doubt the man who tended the fires thought so too. Looking back on those days, one cannot help being struck with the great contrast

between the coast lights then and our own admirable arrangements now. The coal fire was generally made in an iron basket fixed out in the open air, and in the worst of weather the keeper had to work hard to keep his fire burning in spite of the most furious winds or the most deluging rains. Under the depressing influence of constant and heavy rain it can easily be understood that it was no joke to have to keep up a bright blazing fire. And with the most careful attention these fires were found to be most uncertain and unreliable, at one time flaring wildly to the sky, and at another obscured by smoke or in a sulky state of dull red heat. Experience suggested that a steady permanent light was what was wanted—a light that would not be affected by the uncertain influences of the weather. So the candles of the period were tried at one or two places with a lantern, but in only a few instances could they be made useful, the light being so weak. The Eddystone for a long time was illuminated by twenty-four candles only, in a sort of chandelier. But, after a time, oil was brought into use. Spermaceti seems to have been found the best adapted for burning and for giving a good light, and for over fifty years was used. Recently, however, it has been found that rape-seed oil is much cheaper, and can be burned so as to give as good a light as the sperm, so it is generally used at the present day. It has been found that oil light is the most reliable, requires the least amount of attention, is more economical, and at present answers the purpose of marking our coasts better than any other light.

Nevertheless, the authorities who have charge of the important business of lighting England's shores have by no means been insensible to the various means of illumination which have at different times appeared. Experiments have been and are constantly being made, as to the advantages of the numerous sources of light which have at times been brought out.

Five different oils have been tried: first, sperm, which, as has been said, was used for some time, until displaced by rape-seed; then colza was tried for a time, but although it proved to be more economical, yet it was by no means found equal to rape or sperm; olive oil has also been tested, and found wanting. Since the time when Americans have been making colossal fortunes by "striking ile," no end of proposals have been received for the application of the

mineral oils to lighthouses, but there are certain risks connected with the use of petroleum and paraffine which make it particularly undesirable that they should be employed on such an important duty.

It is probable that many people wonder why gas is not more generally used; but there are numerous objections in the way at present. The light, it is found, would certainly be a little better than the oil flame; but to change from oil to gas would involve a large outlay for new burners, &c., and an entire sacrifice of the present valuable oil lamps in the numerous lighthouses; then, again, it would be necessary to establish for each lighthouse gasworks with numerous outbuildings and cumbersome machinery, to do which, at most stations, would be dreadfully expensive, and at all rock stations impossible; and the difficulties in the way of conveying sufficient quantities of coal to the outlying and distant lighthouses would be most serious. To balance these drawbacks, the gain would be only a little brighter light, and so the oil light has retained its supremacy.

The oxy-hydrogen or lime light has been experimented upon; but the complicated arrangements for producing the light, and the uncertainty of its steady maintenance, have proved serious objections to its application to the lighting our coasts.

Magnesium also has been tried. No doubt those who have watched the ascent of the magnesium balloons on firework nights at the Crystal Palace, have thought that really such a beautiful, brilliant light might be in some manner made useful; and truly, if a light of such a power could be placed in a lighthouse, its splendour would almost light up the dark waves, edging them all with silver, and its piercing rays would project their light even beyond the horizon. But its unreliability and its insufficient development make it inapplicable at present.

Many other kinds of light have been tried, but only one has at present shown itself so superior to other lights, and so manageable, as to justify the authorities in placing it at a lighthouse. We refer to the electric light, produced by magnetic induction, which may fairly be said to be the "coming" light.

The low outstretching point of Dungeness is now marked by the electric light, and like a beautiful star it meets the sailor's eye as he comes above the horizon on a dark night. In comparison with its intense white light the flame of the burning oil appears of a yellow or sometimes a

reddish colour, and altogether of a softer nature; while the vivid brightness of the electric spark seems to pierce the darkness with extraordinary power. It is surprising to think that there really is no body of flame to produce this brilliant effect, but indeed it is nothing more than white heat caused by the meeting of two opposing electric currents. These currents are generated by a powerful electrical machine, the motive power to which is supplied by steam; and are conveyed up to the lamp by two copper wires, each terminating in a carbon point. These two points have to be kept at a certain distance from each other, and when the two opposite currents meet at these points, the resistance of one against the other causes the tips of the carbons to glow, become white hot, and to melt or fuse, and the incandescent or molten state of the carbon points is the brilliant electric light itself. At the Exposition in Paris in 1867 the splendid effect of this light might have been seen. A building was erected in the park for the purpose of showing it off, and eye-witnesses speak of it as something marvellous, how a clearly defined horizontal beam was projected through the darkness, lighting up objects for many miles. The French authorities have not been slow to discover the value of the light, for already they have adopted it at the lighthouse at Cape La Hève, and indeed they seem to fancy that to them belongs the principal credit for bringing the light into use. But it is well known that the grand discovery of Professor Faraday of the principle of generating electricity by magnetic induction was first utilised by Professor Holmes, who invented an apparatus for producing light thereby, which was tried in 1859 at the South Foreland Lighthouse. Our neighbours, however, with their quick perception, soon elaborated the somewhat imperfect apparatus of Professor Holmes; but that gentleman has since completely outstripped the Frenchman by a new and improved machine.

So much for some of the sources of light: we have yet a few words to say regarding the means adopted to make the most of them.

There was a time when no one thought of trying to make something more of a light than there really was; nothing was known of such things as reflectors or other aids to light, so that coal fires blazed, and candles cast their flickering feeble rays on the waters, quite unassisted. However, it was discovered at last that light could be

increased by having a reflecting surface behind it, and at one of the coal fires a mild attempt at reflection was made by placing a flat roughly polished brazen plate on the land side of the fire. But as time went on, and other improvements in lights were made, it came about that reflectors began to be extensively used, and the system of lighting called catoptric was gradually developed. Science lent her aid to the maturing of this important branch of national duty, and ultimately a lighting apparatus was produced, consisting of a number of argand lamps on a framework, each with a reflector behind. We might greatly puzzle our readers, were we to enter into the consideration of the details respecting the proper shape, &c., of these reflectors. We might discourse a great deal about the rays of incidence and reflected rays, about parabolic, concave, and spherical reflectors, and we might indulge in a heap of technical talk which would plunge most readers into a state of hopeless bewilderment, but such details would not be generally interesting. The arrangement with lamps and reflectors was certainly very good; indeed, the practical proof of that is, that it has been used for over fifty years; but some clever personage at last thought of the plan of magnifying one large flame with a lens, and this was the beginning of a system of lighting called dioptric.

Instead of the number of lamps was substituted one powerful oil light, a light produced by four (or fewer) circular wicks, one inside the other, with a little space between each. It seems rather a strange statement to make, that the object is to burn these wicks as little as possible; but such is really the case. By an ingenious mechanical contrivance, a regular supply of oil is arranged—in fact, a constant overflow is maintained, so that the wicks are literally deluged with oil, and thus, to a great extent, prevented from charring, while the oil alone burns. The flame is generally kept up to a height of three and a half inches, which itself is no mean light, being constituted of four distinct flames from the four wicks. But a splendid arrangement is now adopted for making much more of this light, and for so directing its rays that only a little light is lost. It will be readily understood that, from such a body of flame as has been described, the light would radiate in all directions, and therefore for lighthouse purposes a good deal of it would be wasted, because the rays are wanted to be thrown only on

the sea to be of service to mariners, and not to be lost up in the air, nor underneath on the floor of the lantern, or the ground on which the lighthouse stands. So it was thought that possibly some of this wasted light might be reclaimed and made serviceable, and, after a number of trials, a plan was established, which is now in general and successful operation at most of our British lighthouses. Inside the great glass lantern, which is usually about twelve feet high, is placed another framework of glass, corresponding in some extent to the shape of the lantern, and enclosing the lamp. This framework is composed, firstly, of a band of glass round the middle, called the lenticular belt, placed on a level with the flame, whereby the light is considerably magnified. At the top, the framework forms a circular dome, and is composed of a number of peculiarly shaped pieces of glass, called prisms, so adjusted that every ray of light emanating from the oil flame is intercepted by one of these prisms, and is thereby diverted from the course it would have taken, had it not been interfered with. As it is, the ray is refracted or bent, and instead of going up into the sky is sent out on to the sea. The lower part of the apparatus is another set of prisms, which, in a similar manner, prevent the light being wasted below. Thus is the light sent out from a lighthouse lantern to strike the sea as far as the line of the horizon in a compact body, and as clearly defined as the sun's rays striking into a darkened room. The light from the Eddystone streams out all round, something like a huge umbrella, the tower forming the stick; and it would be quite possible to get right in underneath the light, only it would be dangerous to venture into the unilluminated part on account of the treacherous reefs that surround the Eddystone. If sailors know themselves to be in the neighbourhood, and cannot see the light, they know at once they are in danger.

Many will think that, if the oil light can be made so much of by the dioptric apparatus, how much more can be done with the electric light? And no doubt, as the development of the powers of this wonderful luminary progresses, the further application of the dioptric system will render it even more splendid. At present this system is applied in a very limited way. There are six orders of dioptric lights, and the electric light has only the lowest or sixth-order apparatus. There is a proposal now under consideration for lighting buoys and beacons by electricity, to send out two

currents from land to meet in an apparatus on the buoy or beacon. Whether the plan will ever be successful, time alone will show. It certainly would be rather amusing if all the buoys at the entrance of the Thames, for instance, were lighted with numerous-coloured lights, reminding one of the variegated illumination of Vauxhall or Cremorne.

Another novel mode of lighting beacons is in use at Arnish, in Scotland. The beacon is on a rock, some little distance from land, and is fitted with an apparatus for the reception of a beam of light thrown from a lighthouse on shore, which, by the aid of reflection and refraction, is made to appear exactly like a veritable light. Indeed, the fishermen in the neighbourhood will not believe that it is only a reflection, or, as it is called, an "apparent light," but will maintain that there is a real light on the beacon.

We may, if we please, take some credit to ourselves for our coast-lighting arrangements, especially considering that no country is so efficiently lighted as our own. We have in previous articles* spoken of light-houses, light-vessels, and the men who attend on them, and, on consideration of some of the details connected with the light itself, we can only come to the same conclusion we have before expressed, that we in England have much cause to be thankful that the responsible duty of lighting our coasts is so admirably carried out.

THE BRIDGE OF SIGHS.

A YACHTING STORY.

CHAPTER XVI. A DECISION.

A WORRIED, nervous-looking gentleman was asking at the railway station the way down to the port, and where he should find Mr. Conway. A tall and burly clergyman strode round suddenly, and took him into custody. "Lord Formanton! I saw your name on your portmanteau, my lord. I am the Reverend Doctor Bailey, vicar of this place. Know your son most intimately; dined with me the other day. There, you stand back, sir. Don't crowd about the doorway, please. Policeman, let us pass. No use! Scandalous," and so on.

To such violent courtesies one could only submit. And in a few moments Doctor Bailey was seen walking down the main street with the strange gentleman on his

arm. His lordship was resigned or absent, having serious things to think of, and his brows contracted with vexation or worry.

"You must come up and have lunch at my little place: carriage is actually waiting about here. I will take no excuse; it's laid you know, and ready——"

"I can't indeed—much obliged," said his lordship, shortly: "out of the question. Just show me where the yacht lies, if you would be so good."

The Almandine lay out in the middle; but the doctor took a fussy and complicated way of doing what was very simple.

"Where's Dan, the club boatman? Some one look for him. Just wait here while I go and find the secretary. It is right we should see him. He knows all about this."

"But that must be the yacht," said the other. "I am sure of it." A sailor standing by hailed her in the usual way, a boat was seen coming off, thus simplifying all the doctor's arrangements.

As father and son exchanged greetings, Doctor Bailey stood a short way off, with an ostentatious abstention, as though not wishing to intrude on such sacred feelings. ("It was very nice," he said, later, telling the story, "very nice. That fine young man, and the nobleman, as unassuming a creature as you or I." This might have been true as regards "You," but it would be hard to rival the arrogance of "I.") After a moment or two, he joined them with an air of persuasion, as who should say, "Where shall we go to now?"

Conway felt a sort of half-guilty feeling in the presence of Jessica's father. Lord Formanton said to him, in a wearied way:

"Get rid of this man. We don't want him. I have so much to say to you."

"We are going on board, Doctor Bailey."

"Then let us have the club boat; we are entitled to it. Where's Dan, the club boatman?"

"I hope to see you later," said Conway, shortly. "My father and I have some important matters to talk of. Good-bye!" The doctor was thus repulsed.

"Where can I speak to you, George? In that cabin every word is heard."

"We can put the men on board." Conway took the oars, and Doctor Bailey on the club steps, pointing them out with his stick, was much confounded by the erratic proceedings of the little boat.

"What is the matter, father?" said the son, rowing quickly out to sea. "I can guess it; but tell me the details."

"It is no use going into them. I am bewildered myself. I did not know what

* See ALL THE YEAR ROUND, New Series, vol. ii., pp. 328, 473.

was going on. She has ruined and destroyed us."

"But surely not," said Conway, stopping, "all in such a short time! It seems incredible! A fine estate shrivelled to nothing in this manner. Are you certain about all this? Has all been fair?"

"You know Bolton?—a hard-headed, honest fellow, that speaks plainly. He says a fortnight, at the outside, is all we can hope to keep afloat for. Then there will be something disgraceful, unless—unless—we can be helped. Some one wrote from here. The whole place was talking of it, the letter said. For God's sake, do what you can for us, and save the family. Put aside that other girl."

"What other girl?" said Conway.

"Oh, that was said also; there was some low girl here that was in the way, and had got some pledge from you."

"False! A low vulgar story."

"I knew it. At any rate, we must put by romance and that sort of thing; for we are on a precipice, George, and you must make a sacrifice to save the family."

"My life," said Conway, "has hitherto been something of a sacrifice, so I may as well continue it."

Mr. Conway was cautious enough, even to his father, and said nothing of the proposal he had received that morning. There was no reason why he should not win all the honours of self-sacrifice by resignation. The father was still a little disturbed about "the other girl," and asked doubtfully who she was. His son took a pleasure in enlarging on her praises, perhaps to indemnify himself. Was he not now to be sold into captivity by a combination of dealers, as it were? "One of the finest natures: the quickest and most natural you ever heard of. No one could dream that such could be found in a place like this. Yet must I treat her in this way?"

"What! that man's daughter? Oh, I dare say she is well used to this. These places are like garrison towns. My dear George, think—a man of your abilities and prospects!"

"Fine prospects, indeed, that have caused me to be led into the market. Look at that, father, and see how just you have been to that noble girl!"

He showed him the letter he had received that morning. His father read it with disquietude.

"But, in God's name, don't let me hear that you are irrevocably pledged. You said," he added, appealingly, "you were to consult me."

"Yes," said Conway, beginning to row in his hesitation; "but I was sure you would not——"

"You were always truthful and straightforward, George, and would not act on empty pretences. That I know. You would not *pretend* to consult me, having all the while made up your mind to act independently of me."

When father and son boarded the yacht, one of the sailors, just arrived from shore, put into Conway's hand some letters brought from the club. By a sort of reaction in this rather uncertain mind, the transaction had begun to have a very ugly air, something in the nature of trafficking or sale. This was not surely what he was to live for; and of a sudden it flashed upon him that it was scarcely honourable, or gentlemanly, or "lordly," to pay his father's debts by a marriage. It seemed akin to slave-market principles. No one had been so bitter, so scathing, in his branding of those mothers who dragged their daughters to the bazaars and sale-rooms of fashionable life, and sold them to the best bidders. Here was he doing the same with his own precious person.

"This is a very serious thing, father," he said, warmly; "and I should have time to consider. It sounds shabby and mean to take this poor girl's fortune to benefit ourselves."

"There is no time, George. That is the worst of it. Thinking it over will not make the matter better or worse, clearer or more obscure. But, I say, it is time for you to put away all this hair-splitting and metaphysics. I have no patience with it. I tell you, there's not an hour to lose. Act like other men of sense, and men of the world. What have you got there?"

Conway was reading one of his letters, which he had torn open. It was from Jessica. Never did events seem so to compete, as it were, for the guidance of this petted gentleman.

DEAR MR. CONWAY,—One of my wretched bursts of temper made me write as I did this morning. I have, indeed, no title to speak to you as I have done. Be generous, and forgive. Oh, what mean, unworthy motives you must impute to me! I could sink for shame and confusion. And yet I meant well; indeed I did. It was of your interest I was thinking, not of my own. Now I must bear the penalty. And do what I can, you *must* think that mean pitiful jealousy of her was at the bottom of all. I know I have forfeited your esteem and respect for ever, and that nothing will

restore it to me. But I accept that as the penalty.

I may speak plainly now; for, from what you said last night, I seemed to gather that I had won some liking from you—that you understood me, felt with me, and liked me. This remains to me to think of, whatever be your fate: and when you are united to her, whom my ungoverned humour made me think unworthy of you, I shall be more than content, if you would forget what I wrote to you this morning. JESSICA.

"There," said Conway, passionately, "there is what you call on me to destroy in this wicked holocaust. I *must* have time—an hour or two—before I give you my answer. I am not a stock or stone. If we are to follow the cold-blooded schemes of the world, we must devise means as cold-blooded."

His father looked at him with a fretted "put-out" air. "Oh, I see how it will be," he said. "Everybody is selfish, and only thinks of their own advancement. You are caught by this low girl."

"Low!" said his son. "Does *that* read like what is low? But you are hasty, father. I *must* have a little time, if only a few hours, to find some way out of all this. I cannot be too cold and heartless."

"Take as long as you please, my dear boy," cried his father, much relieved; "that is, until evening. Most natural you should wish to do the thing in a gentlemanly way. I know you will manage it without hurting feelings, or anything of that sort. After all, girls now-a-days don't break their hearts, and look on all this very much as business."

He was put on shore. It will be seen, he was a rather selfish nobleman. Nothing could have turned out better, he thought. This would hurry his son into a most advantageous marriage, which would be the saving of his family. He would have been going on for years "pottering about," and playing the romantic with half a dozen girls, until his season had passed by. Suddenly he stopped, and became uneasy. There was something in the sketch of that parson's daughter he did not like. They seemed of the coarse low sort, who fasten on tight, give trouble, and decline to be shaken off. If he could see her, or the doctor! He got into a fly, and drove out.

CHAPTER XVII. ATTACK AND REPULSE.

A CUNNING and clever idea, as he thought it, had crossed his mind. There was an aged and infirm incumbent of a family living on his estate, and the living was

what is called a fat one. It must be worth double what the vicar of St. Arthur's enjoyed. This would surely make all "safe;" for he was still troubled by the idea of this girl. She was the danger. There was no end to the schemes of low, clever women, brought up and trained in the predatory habits of places like this, where men came and went, and where all plans were carried out swiftly and shortly. They were not sure if the doctor was in. His lordship was shown into the drawing-room, where he waited, filling up the time with that curiosity and speculation mankind gives itself up to when left waiting in a strange room, and expecting strange people. Thus engaged, he heard a step and a rustle, and a lady, not the doctor, stood before him.

She was so natural she could not help colouring, knowing that this was her admirer's father. But the next moment came an instinct as to the object of this visit; and a feminine defiance rose into her pale face.

"My father," she said, "is unfortunately out: we can send for him."

"Not at all," said the guest, hastily, for another idea had taken the place of the first. "You are Miss Bailey, I may suppose? My son was speaking of you this morning;" and he fixed his eyes upon her.

Jessica felt, somehow, that this was going to take a sort of judicial tone, which she could not at all accept with the consciousness that she was, so to speak, innocent. The other, looking at her narrowly, saw that she was very dangerous indeed—handsome, interesting, with a bold fearless character that might be more than a match for him, and certainly for "the foolish fellow she hoped to entrap."

"I am very sorry," he went on, "that he ever came here. George has the way, so common with young men, of what is called amusing himself. These yachting men are like the Jack Tars in the navy, and have a love in every port."

Jessica drew herself up haughtily. "What their ways may be," she said firmly, "have nothing to do with me. Mr. Conway, I fancy, would hardly accept that character."

An audacious girl, thought his lordship. "You cannot know him so well as I do," he said, smiling. "I have heard something of his proceedings, at this place even. It was time, I thought, that the old father should appear upon the scene. You see, Miss Bailey, he is a young man of good position—heir to my estates and title, with first-rate prospects."

With a scornful lip Jessica repeated the words, "First-rate prospects! Indeed?"

His lordship was taken back. A most bold and daring girl. Dudley knew everything. "Well, eventually, eventually. In short, he is entitled to look for a first-rate match and connexion; and really, Miss Bailey, to speak plainly——"

"You have been speaking plainly, my lord, have you not?" she said, interrupting him in a sort of passionate manner. "Why is this addressed to me? What have I done? I scorn deception of every kind, and will not affect ignorance of the object that has brought Lord Formanton here. Is this the meaning of it, that I interfere with these prospects and the necessity of your son's making an advantageous marriage? In fairness, I may ask, is this what you are coming to?"

"No, no—dear no," said the other, rather alarmed. "God forbid! But young men are so impulsive, and I was so afraid my son had gone further than——"

"Gone further!" said she, her face flushing up, and her eyes flashing. "Now I understand. Then ask him for the whole story, and he is honourable enough to tell. He will suppress nothing as to my behaviour. Ask him for the two letters I wrote to him last night and this morning. Oh! what have I done to be exposed to this!"

He was much alarmed at the sensation-scene into which he had been drawn. He was a clumsy negotiator: possibly, as some of his friends said, because he had been attaché at a foreign court. "Oh, I didn't mean to say it was your fault!"

"My fault!" she repeated. "You are determined to heap mortifications on me. But I am not one of those who disdain to clear themselves through mistaken delicacy. There must be justice done me in this matter. You seem to think of me as—I blush to say it—as some unworthy schemer with designs, as it is called; one who was to be frightened or bought off."

His lordship started at this last charge, which was very near the truth. "I give you my solemn word of honour," he said, not pointing this solemn affirmation at any statement, "that is, I never meant—— But what can a man do? He hears all sorts of strange rumours about his son."

"This will not do, my lord," said she, proudly. "You owe me an amende; and

I must appeal to Mr. Conway solemnly in this matter."

"To be sure. I promise it," said the peer, joyfully. "Nothing could be more handsome or fairer."

"I am sure," went on Jessica, "one of your rank and honour will not be content with that conventional amende. Your own heart will tell you that an acknowledgment, as formal as the charge you came here to make, is owing to me."

"I shall make it a point," said the nobleman, eagerly, "you may depend on it. You see, it is a delicate matter on both sides, and hard to approach. You must be indulgent, Miss Bailey, in the case of a father; for, I assure you, in George's case we cannot afford—it would be fatal—to make a mistake. I am really sorry to have hurt your feelings; but the family depends, to a great measure, on George. Here is this fine estate of Panton Castle, and all that—a nice girl——"

"You put them in the proper order," said she.

"Ehem! Well, you know I am a business man; and no man, peer or peasant, is ashamed to want money or advancement. He is my own son, and I look to his real interest."

"With those views, then, you had better speak to my father, whom I see coming in now. But, before that, I ask you, finally, do you understand my position in this matter?"

"Certainly—certainly; depend on me."

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